

BEFORE THE DEPARTMENT OF  
NATURAL RESOURCES AND CONSERVATION  
OF THE STATE OF MONTANA

\* \* \* \* \*

APPLICATION FOR BENEFICIAL WATER  
USE PERMIT NO. 76LJ 30162100 BY LION )  
MOUNTAIN OWNERS ASSOCIATION ) PRELIMINARY DETERMINATION TO  
(LMOA) ) GRANT PERMIT

\* \* \* \* \*

On October 23, 2023, Lion Mountain Owner Association (LMOA) (Applicant) submitted Surface Water Application for Beneficial Water Use Permit No. 76LJ 30162100 to the Kalispell Regional Office of the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (Department or DNRC). The applicant proposes to divert 15 gallons per minute (GPM) up to a volume of 0.5 acre-feet (AF) annually from the Whitefish River (Whitefish Lake). The proposed use is lawn and garden irrigation. The Department published receipt of the application on its website. A preapplication meeting was held between the Department and the Applicant on October 23, 2023. The application was determined to be correct and complete as of February 6, 2024. An Environmental Assessment for this application was completed on May 9, 2023.

**INFORMATION**

The Department considered the following information submitted by the Applicant, which is contained in the administrative record.

Application as filed:

- Application for Beneficial Water Use Permit, Form 600SW
- Permit Application Criteria Addendum
- Attachments:
  - Attachment A. Certificate of Survey 12114
  - Attachment B. Pump Specifications and Pump Curve
  - Attachment C. Hydraulic Calculations
  - Attachment D. Water System Components Specifications
- Maps:
  - Site Vicinity
  - Point of Diversion Map
  - Sprinkler Irrigation Plan Map

Information within the Department's Possession/Knowledge

- Mean monthly stream flow data for the Whitefish River from the United States Geological Survey (USGS) Gaging Station #12366000 near Kalispell, MT (period of record October 1929 – November 2023) used for physical and legal availability analyses.
- List of existing surface water rights on the Whitefish River system from the Whitefish Lake inlet to the confluence with the Stillwater River. This list was used to quantify physical and legal availability and to analyze adverse effect.

The Department has fully reviewed and considered the evidence and argument submitted in this application and preliminarily determines the following pursuant to the Montana Water Use Act (Title 85, chapter 2, part 3, MCA).

For the purposes of this document, Department of DNRC means the Department of Natural Resources & Conservation; CFS means cubic feet per second; GPM means gallons per minute; AF means acre-feet; AC means acres; AF/YR means acre-feet per year; POD means point of diversion; and POU means place of use.

**PROPOSED APPROPRIATION**

**FINDINGS OF FACT**

1. The Applicant proposes to divert water from the Whitefish River (Whitefish Lake), hereafter Whitefish Lake, by means of a pump. The proposed use of this diversion is irrigation for 0.2 acres of lawn and garden during a period of April 15 to October 15. During the proposed period of diversion, the applicant requests a flow rate of 15 GPM for an annual volume of up to 0.5 AF. The point of diversion is in the NE $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$  Section 22, Township 31N, Range 22W, Flathead County, Montana (Figure 1). The place of use is located at 750 Beach Lane Whitefish, MT in the NE $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$  Section 22, Township 31N, Range 22W, Flathead County, Montana (Figure 1). The proposed diversion is in the Upper Flathead River Basin (76LJ), in an area not subject to water right basin closures or controlled groundwater area restrictions.

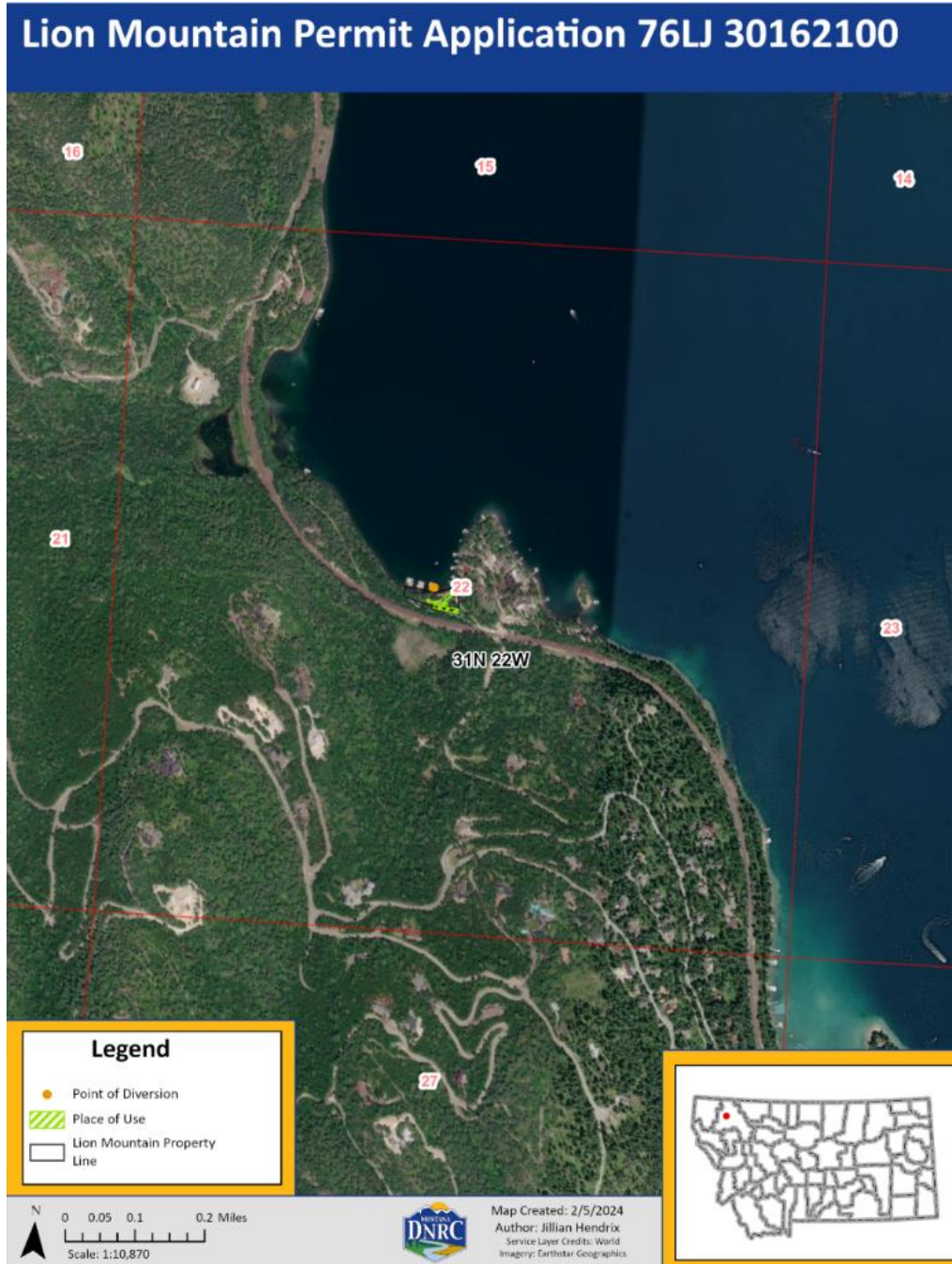


Figure 1. Map of the proposed place of use and point of diversion.

**§ 85-2-311, MCA, BENEFICIAL WATER USE PERMIT CRITERIA**

**GENERAL CONCLUSIONS OF LAW**

2. The Montana Constitution expressly recognizes in relevant part that:

- (1) All existing rights to the use of any waters for any useful or beneficial purpose are hereby recognized and confirmed.
- (2) The use of all water that is now or may hereafter be appropriated for sale, rent, distribution, or other beneficial use . . . shall be held to be a public use.
- (3) All surface, underground, flood, and atmospheric waters within the boundaries of the state are the property of the state for the use of its people and are subject to appropriation for beneficial uses as provided by law.

Mont. Const. Art. IX, § 3. While the Montana Constitution recognizes the need to protect senior appropriators, it also recognizes a policy to promote the development and use of the waters of the state by the public. This policy is further expressly recognized in the water policy adopted by the Legislature codified at § 85-2-102, MCA, which states in relevant part:

- (1) Pursuant to Article IX of the Montana constitution, the legislature declares that any use of water is a public use and that the waters within the state are the property of the state for the use of its people and are subject to appropriation for beneficial uses as provided in this chapter. . . .
- (3) It is the policy of this state and a purpose of this chapter to encourage the wise use of the state's water resources by making them available for appropriation consistent with this chapter and to provide for the wise utilization, development, and conservation of the waters of the state for the maximum benefit of its people with the least possible degradation of the natural aquatic ecosystems. In pursuit of this policy, the state encourages the development of facilities that store and conserve waters for beneficial use, for the maximization of the use of those waters in Montana . . .

3. Pursuant to § 85-2-302(1), MCA, except as provided in §§ 85-2-306 and 85-2-369, MCA, a person may not appropriate water or commence construction of diversion, impoundment, withdrawal, or related distribution works except by applying for and receiving a permit from the Department. See § 85-2-102(1), MCA. An Applicant in a beneficial water use permit proceeding must affirmatively prove all of the applicable criteria in § 85-2-311, MCA. Section § 85-2-311(1) states in relevant part:

- ... the department shall issue a permit if the Applicant proves by a preponderance of evidence that the following criteria are met:
- (a) (i) there is water physically available at the proposed point of diversion in the amount that the Applicant seeks to appropriate; and
  - (ii) water can reasonably be considered legally available during the period in which the Applicant seeks to appropriate, in the amount requested, based on the records of the department and other evidence provided to the department. Legal availability is determined using an analysis involving the following factors:
    - (A) identification of physical water availability;
    - (B) identification of existing legal demands on the source of supply throughout the area of potential impact by the proposed use; and
    - (C) analysis of the evidence on physical water availability and the existing legal demands, including but not limited to a comparison of the physical water supply at the proposed point of diversion with the existing legal demands on the supply of water.
  - (b) the water rights of a prior appropriator under an existing water right, a certificate, a

permit, or a state water reservation will not be adversely affected. In this subsection (1)(b), adverse effect must be determined based on a consideration of an Applicant's plan for the exercise of the permit that demonstrates that the Applicant's use of the water will be controlled so the water right of a prior appropriator will be satisfied;

(c) the proposed means of diversion, construction, and operation of the appropriation works are adequate;

(d) the proposed use of water is a beneficial use;

(e) the Applicant has a possessory interest or the written consent of the person with the possessory interest in the property where the water is to be put to beneficial use, or if the proposed use has a point of diversion, conveyance, or place of use on national forest system lands, the Applicant has any written special use authorization required by federal law to occupy, use, or traverse national forest system lands for the purpose of diversion, impoundment, storage, transportation, withdrawal, use, or distribution of water under the permit;

(f) the water quality of a prior appropriator will not be adversely affected;

(g) the proposed use will be substantially in accordance with the classification of water set for the source of supply pursuant to 75-5-301(1); and

(h) the ability of a discharge permit holder to satisfy effluent limitations of a permit issued in accordance with Title 75, chapter 5, part 4, will not be adversely affected.

(2) The Applicant is required to prove that the criteria in subsections (1)(f) through (1)(h) have been met only if a valid objection is filed. A valid objection must contain substantial credible information establishing to the satisfaction of the department that the criteria in subsection (1)(f), (1)(g), or (1)(h), as applicable, may not be met. For the criteria set forth in subsection (1)(g), only the department of environmental quality or a local water quality district established under Title 7, chapter 13, part 45, may file a valid objection.

To meet the preponderance of evidence standard, “the Applicant, in addition to other evidence demonstrating that the criteria of subsection (1) have been met, shall submit hydrologic or other evidence, including but not limited to water supply data, field reports, and other information developed by the Applicant, the department, the U.S. geological survey, or the U.S. natural resources conservation service and other specific field studies.” Section 85-2-311(5), MCA (emphasis added). The determination of whether an application has satisfied the § 85-2-311, MCA criteria is committed to the discretion of the Department. *Bostwick Properties, Inc. v. Montana Dept. of Natural Resources and Conservation*, 2009 MT 181, ¶ 21. The Department is required grant a permit only if the § 85-2-311, MCA, criteria are proven by the Applicant by a preponderance of the evidence. Id. A preponderance of evidence is “more probably than not.” *Hohenlohe v. DNRC*, 2010 MT 203, ¶¶ 33, 35, 357 Mont. 438, 240 P.3d 628.

4. Pursuant to § 85-2-312, MCA, the Department may condition permits as it deems necessary to meet the statutory criteria:

(1) (a) The department may issue a permit for less than the amount of water requested, but may not issue a permit for more water than is requested or than can be beneficially used without waste for the purpose stated in the application. The department may require

modification of plans and specifications for the appropriation or related diversion or construction. The department may issue a permit subject to terms, conditions, restrictions, and limitations it considers necessary to satisfy the criteria listed in 85-2-311 and subject to subsection (1)(b), and it may issue temporary or seasonal permits. A permit must be issued subject to existing rights and any final determination of those rights made under this chapter.

*E.g., Montana Power Co. v. Carey* (1984), 211 Mont. 91, 96, 685 P.2d 336, 339 (requirement to grant applications as applied for, would result in, “uncontrolled development of a valuable natural resource” which “contradicts the spirit and purpose underlying the Water Use Act.”); see also, *In the Matter of Application for Beneficial Water Use Permit No. 65779-76M by Barbara L. Sowers* (DNRC Final Order 1988)(conditions in stipulations may be included if it further compliance with statutory criteria); *In the Matter of Application for Beneficial Water Use Permit No. 42M-80600 and Application for Change of Appropriation Water Right No. 42M-036242 by Donald H. Wyrick* (DNRC Final Order 1994); Admin. R. Mont. (ARM) 36.12.207.

5. The Montana Supreme Court further recognized in *Matter of Beneficial Water Use Permit Numbers 66459-76L, Ciotti: 64988-G76L, Starnes*, 278 Mont. 50, 60-61, 923 P.2d 1073, 1079, 1080 (1996), *superseded by legislation on another issue*:

Nothing in that section [85-2-313], however, relieves an Applicant of his burden to meet the statutory requirements of § 85-2-311, MCA, before DNRC may issue that provisional permit. Instead of resolving doubts in favor of appropriation, the Montana Water Use Act requires an Applicant to make explicit statutory showings that there are unappropriated waters in the source of supply, that the water rights of a prior appropriator will not be adversely affected, and that the proposed use will not unreasonably interfere with a planned use for which water has been reserved.

See also, *Wesmont Developers v. DNRC*, CDV-2009-823, First Judicial District Court, *Memorandum and Order* (2011). The Supreme Court likewise explained that:

.... unambiguous language of the legislature promotes the understanding that the Water Use Act was designed to protect senior water rights holders from encroachment by junior appropriators adversely affecting those senior rights.

*Montana Power Co.*, 211 Mont. at 97-98, 685 P.2d at 340; see also Mont. Const. art. IX §3(1).

6. An appropriation, diversion, impoundment, use, restraint, or attempted appropriation, diversion, impoundment, use, or restraint contrary to the provisions of § 85-2-311, MCA is invalid. An officer, agent, agency, or employee of the state may not knowingly permit, aid, or assist in any manner an unauthorized appropriation, diversion, impoundment, use, or other restraint. A person or corporation may not, directly or indirectly, personally or through an agent,

officer, or employee, attempt to appropriate, divert, impound, use, or otherwise restrain or control waters within the boundaries of this state except in accordance with this § 85-2-311, MCA. Section 85-2-311(6), MCA.

7. The Department may take notice of judicially cognizable facts and generally recognized technical or scientific facts within the Department's specialized knowledge, as specifically identified in this document. ARM 36.12.221(4).

## **PHYSICAL AVAILABILITY**

### **FINDINGS OF FACT**

8. The Applicant proposes to divert up to 0.5 AF annually at a maximum flow rate of 15 GPM from Whitefish Lake. USGS #123660000 on the Whitefish River near Kalispell, MT is the nearest gage to the proposed POD from Whitefish Lake. The POD for this application is approximately 10 miles upstream of the gaging station. The data range used includes the entire period of record for this gage (October 1929-November 2023). The DNRC used the method below to quantify physically available monthly flows and volumes at the POD during the proposed period of diversion.

9. The Department calculated median of the mean monthly flow rates in cubic feet per second (CFS) for the Whitefish River using USGS Gage #12366000 records for each month of the proposed period of diversion (Table 1, column B). Those flows were converted to monthly volumes in AF (Table 1, column C) using the following equation found on DNRC Water Calculation Guide:

*Median of the mean monthly flow (CFS) x 1.98 (AF/day/1 CFS) x days/month = AF/month.*

- i. The Department calculated the monthly flows appropriated by existing users upstream of the gage on the source (Table 1, column D) by:
- ii. Generating a list of existing water rights from the Whitefish Lake inlet to USGS Gage #12366000 (list is included in the application file and available upon request);
- iii. Delegating irrigation and lawn and garden uses as occurring from April 1 to October 31;
- iv. Delegating all other water uses as year-round uses;
- v. Assigning a single combined flow rate of 0.08 CFS to all livestock direct from source rights without a designated flow rate; and,
- vi. Assuming that the flow rate of each existing right is continuously diverted throughout each month of the period of diversion. This assumption is necessary due to the difficulty of differentiating the distribution of appropriated volume over the period of diversion. This

leads to an overestimation of existing uses from the source. The Department finds this an appropriate measure of assessing existing rights as it protects existing water users.

vii. Since the gage used is downstream of the POD, the Department added in the flow rates of the existing rights between USGS Gage #12366000 and the Whitefish Lake inlet (Table 1, column D) to the median of the mean monthly gage values (Table 1, column B) to determine physical availability at the POD (Table 1, column E). Physically available monthly flows were then converted to monthly volumes (Table 1, column F) using the following equation found on DNRC Water Calculation Guide:

$$a. \text{ median of the mean monthly flow (CFS)} \times 1.98 \text{ (AF/day/1 CFS)} \times \text{days per month} = \text{AF/month.}$$

Table 1: Physical Availability of Water in Whitefish Lake					
A	B	C	D	E	F
Month	Median of the Mean Monthly Flow at Gage 12366000 (CFS)	Median of the Mean Monthly Volume at Gage 12366000 (AF)	Existing Rights from Whitefish Lake Inlet to Gage 12366000 (CFS)	Physically Available Water at POD (CFS)	Physically Available Water at POD (AF)
April	210.20	12,902.08	84.85	295.05	17,526.18
May	484.70	29,750.89	84.85	569.55	34,959.19
June	583.30	35,802.95	84.85	668.15	39,688.32
July	264.70	16,247.29	84.85	349.55	21,455.59
August	104.20	6,395.80	84.85	189.05	11,604.10
September	80.85	4,962.57	84.85	165.70	9,842.79
October	65.85	4,041.87	84.85	150.70	9,250.18

10. The Department finds the requested flow rate of 15 GPM (0.03 CFS) up to an annual volume of 0.5 AF is physically available in Whitefish Lake during the proposed period of diversion.

**LEGAL AVAILABILITY**

**FINDINGS OF FACT**

11. The Applicant’s proposed diversion from Whitefish Lake will reduce the total volume of water discharging from the Whitefish River system. Therefore, the area of potential impact for this application is the Whitefish River system from the Whitefish Lake inlet downstream to the confluence with the Stillwater River. Legal availability of Whitefish Lake at the POD was



quantified monthly. The DNRC used the method below to quantify legally available monthly flows and volumes at the POD during the proposed period of diversion.

12. The Department quantified physically available monthly flows (Table 2, column B) and volumes for Whitefish Lake at the POD.

13. The Department calculated the monthly flows appropriated by existing users (legal demands) on the source within the area of potential impact (Table 2, columns C-D) by:

- i. Generating a list of existing water rights from the Whitefish Lake inlet to the confluence with the Stillwater River (list is included in the application file and available upon request);
- ii. Designating irrigation and lawn and garden uses as occurring from April 1 to October 31;
- iii. Designating all other water uses as year-round uses;
- iv. Assigning a single combined flow rate of 0.08 CFS to all livestock direct from source rights without a designated flow rate; and,
- v. Assuming that the flow rate of each existing right is continuously diverted throughout each month of the period of diversion. This assumption is necessary due to the difficulty of differentiating the distribution of appropriated volume over the period of diversion. This leads to an overestimation of legal demands on the physical volume of water. The Department finds this an appropriate measure of assessing existing rights as it protects existing water users.

14. The Department subtracted out the flow rates of the existing legal demands (Table 2, columns C-D) within the area of potential impact from the physically available water (Table 2, column B) to determine legal availability at the POD (Table 2, column E). Legally available monthly flows were then converted to monthly volumes (Table 2, column F) using the aforementioned equation from DNRC Water Calculation Guide.

<b>Table 2: Legal Availability of Water in Whitefish Lake</b>					
<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>F</b>
<b>Month</b>	<b>Physically Available Water at POD (CFS)</b>	<b>Existing Legal Demands from Whitefish Lake Inlet to Gage 12366000 (CFS)</b>	<b>Existing Legal Demands From Gage 12366000 to Whitefish River Mouth (CFS)</b>	<b>Physically Available Water Minus Existing Legal Demands (CFS)</b>	<b>Physically Available Water Minus Existing Legal Demands (AF)</b>
April	295.05	84.85	54.52	155.68	9,247.39
May	569.55	84.85	54.52	430.18	26,404.45
June	668.15	84.85	54.52	528.78	31,409.53

July	349.55	84.85	54.52	210.18	12,900.85
August	189.05	84.85	54.52	49.68	3,049.36
September	165.70	84.85	54.52	26.33	1,564.00
October	150.70	84.85	54.52	11.33	695.44

15. The Department finds that the proposed flow rate of 15 GPM (0.03 CFS) up to an annual volume of 0.5 AF is legally available in Whitefish Lake during the proposed period of diversion.

**ADVERSE EFFECT**

**FINDINGS OF FACT**

16. The Applicant provided a plan showing they can regulate their water use during water shortages. To satisfy the water rights of senior appropriators during shortages, the Applicant will:

- i. Initially reduce turf grass irrigation application by 50 percent;
- ii. Irrigate only flowers, shrubs, and trees to ensure survival through drought; and
- iii. The pump will be turned off when a senior user makes a valid call.

17. The Applicant has proven both physical and legal availability of Whitefish Lake water. Enough water remains in Whitefish Lake to meet existing demand and the requested 15 GPM up to 0.5 AF. The Applicant has shown that they can regulate their water use and that they have an implementation plan to protect senior water users. The Department finds that the proposed water use will not adversely affect senior water users.

**ADEQUATE MEANS OF DIVERSION**

**FINDINGS OF FACT**

18. The Applicant proposes to divert water from Whitefish Lake at a maximum rate of 15 GPM using a Franklin Electric model FB15CI 1.5 HP Turf Boss Self Priming Pump. The intake is approximately 8 feet below the low-water elevation, and a 1.25-inch high density polyethylene (HDPE) supply line will convey water approximately 40-feet from the intake to the pump located in the storage building. A Hunter Pro-C Controller will control the conveyance of water to each of the three irrigation zones with a total of 13 Hunter PGP Red standard nozzle sprinkler heads. The controller will be programmed to irrigate on a set schedule, and only one zone will operate at time.

19. The total dynamic head (TDH) of the system during peak demand is 115 feet, based on:

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- i. The minimum system operating pressure of 42 psi (equivalent to 97.1 feet of head);
  - ii. An 8-foot suction lift from Whitefish Lake’s surface to intake hose;
  - iii. An 8-foot elevation gain from the intake to the pump; and,
  - iv. The friction losses in the 1.25-inch HDPE supply line at 15 GPM (equivalent to 1.9 feet of head).
20. The pump can produce 15 GPM at 120-feet TDH based on the Applicant provided pump and system specifications. This flow rate will allow the Applicant to supply their irrigation system at peak demand at an adequate operating pressure. The Department finds that the proposed means of diversion and conveyance are capable of diverting and distributing the requested flow rate of 15 GPM and annual volume of 0.5 AF.

**BENEFICIAL USE**

**FINDINGS OF FACT**

21. The Applicant requests 0.5 AF to irrigate 0.2 acres of lawn and garden (0.2 acres x 2.5 AF/acre = 0.5 AF) based on water use standards found in ARM 35.12.115(2)(b). The Applicant requests a period of diversion of April 15 – October 15, which is within the DNRC standard period of use for USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Climatic Area III per ARM 31.12.112(1)(c)(iii).
22. The Department finds the water use is beneficial and the requested flow rate of 15.0 GPM and lawn and garden volume of 0.5 AF is reasonably justified per ARM 36.12.1801(3).

**POSSESSORY INTEREST**

**FINDINGS OF FACT**

23. The Applicant signed the application form affirming the Applicant has possessory interest or the written consent of the person with the possessory interest, in the property where the water is to be put to beneficial use.

**CONCLUSIONS OF LAW**

**PHYSICAL AVAILABILITY**

24. Pursuant to § 85-2-311(1)(a)(i), MCA, an Applicant must prove by a preponderance of the evidence that “there is water physically available at the proposed point of diversion in the amount that the Applicant seeks to appropriate.”

25. It is the Applicant's burden to produce the required evidence. *In the Matter of Application for Beneficial Water Use Permit No. 27665-411 by Anson* (DNRC Final Order 1987) (Applicant produced no flow measurements or any other information to show the availability of water; permit denied); *In the Matter of Application to Change Water Right No. 41H 1223599 by MGRR #1, LLC.*, (DNRC Final Order 2005).

26. An Applicant must prove that at least in some years there is water physically available at the point of diversion in the amount the Applicant seeks to appropriate. *In the Matter of Application for Beneficial Water Use Permit No. 72662s76G by John Fee and Don Carlson* (DNRC Final Order 1990); *In the Matter of Application for Beneficial Water Use Permit No. 85184s76F by Wills Cattle Co. and Ed McLean* (DNRC Final Order 1994).

27. The Applicant has proven that water is physically available at the proposed point of diversion in the amount Applicant seeks to appropriate. Section 85-2-311(1)(a)(i), MCA. (FOF 8-10)

#### LEGAL AVAILABILITY

28. Pursuant to § 85-2-311(1)(a), MCA, an Applicant must prove by a preponderance of the evidence that:

- (ii) water can reasonably be considered legally available during the period in which the Applicant seeks to appropriate, in the amount requested, based on the records of the department and other evidence provided to the department. Legal availability is determined using an analysis involving the following factors:
  - (A) identification of physical water availability;
  - (B) identification of existing legal demands on the source of supply throughout the area of potential impact by the proposed use; and
  - (C) analysis of the evidence on physical water availability and the existing legal demands, including but not limited to a comparison of the physical water supply at the proposed point of diversion with the existing legal demands on the supply of water.

*E.g.*, ARM 36.12.101 and 36.12.120; *Montana Power Co.*, 211 Mont. 91, 685 P.2d 336 (Permit granted to include only early irrigation season because no water legally available in late irrigation season); *In the Matter of Application for Beneficial Water Use Permit No. 81705-g76F by Hanson* (DNRC Final Order 1992).

29. It is the Applicant's burden to present evidence to prove water can be reasonably considered legally available. *Sitz Ranch v. DNRC*, DV-10-13390, Fifth Judicial District Court, *Order Affirming DNRC Decision*, (2011) Pg. 7 (the legislature set out the criteria (§ 85-2-311, MCA) and placed the burden of proof squarely on the Applicant. The Supreme Court has

instructed that those burdens are exacting.); *see also Matter of Application for Change of Appropriation Water Rights Nos. 101960-41S and 101967-41S by Royston* (1991), 249 Mont. 425, 816 P.2d 1054 (burden of proof on Applicant in a change proceeding to prove required criteria); *In the Matter of Application to Change Water Right No. 41H 1223599 by MGRR #1, LLC.*, (DNRC Final Order 2005) (it is the Applicant's burden to produce the required evidence.); *In the Matter of Application for Beneficial Water Use Permit No. 41H 30023457 by Utility Solutions, LLC* (DNRC Final Order 2007) (permit denied for failure to prove legal availability); *see also* ARM 36.12.1705.

30. Applicant has proven by a preponderance of the evidence that water can reasonably be considered legally available during the period in which the Applicant seeks to appropriate, in the amount requested, based on the records of the Department and other evidence provided to the Department. Section 85-2-311(1)(a)(ii), MCA. (FOF 11-15)

#### ADVERSE EFFECT

31. Pursuant to § 85-2-311(1)(b), MCA, the Applicant bears the affirmative burden of proving by a preponderance of the evidence that the water rights of a prior appropriator under an existing water right, a certificate, a permit, or a state water reservation will not be adversely affected. Analysis of adverse effect must be determined based on a consideration of an Applicant's plan for the exercise of the permit that demonstrates that the Applicant's use of the water will be controlled so the water right of a prior appropriator will be satisfied. *See Montana Power Co.*, 211 Mont. 91, 685 P.2d 336 (1984) (purpose of the Water Use Act is to protect senior appropriators from encroachment by junior users); *Bostwick Properties, Inc.*, ¶ 21.

32. An Applicant must analyze the full area of potential impact under the § 85-2-311, MCA criteria. *In the Matter of Beneficial Water Use Permit No. 76N-30010429 by Thompson River Lumber Company* (DNRC Final Order 2006). While § 85-2-361, MCA, limits the boundaries expressly required for compliance with the hydrogeologic assessment requirement, an Applicant is required to analyze the full area of potential impact for adverse effect in addition to the requirement of a hydrogeologic assessment. *Id.* ARM 36.12.120(5).

33. Applicant must prove that no prior appropriator will be adversely affected, not just the objectors. *Sitz Ranch v. DNRC*, DV-10-13390, Fifth Judicial District Court, *Order Affirming DNRC Decision*, 4 (2011).

34. In analyzing adverse effect to other appropriators, an Applicant may use the water rights claims of potentially affected appropriators as evidence of their "historic beneficial use." *See*

*Matter of Application for Change of Appropriation Water Rights Nos. 101960-41S and 101967-41S by Royston*, 249 Mont. 425, 816 P.2d 1054 (1991).

35. It is the Applicant's burden to produce the required evidence. *E.g., Sitz Ranch v. DNRC*, DV-10-13390, Fifth Judicial District Court, *Order Affirming DNRC Decision*, 7 (2011) (legislature has placed the burden of proof squarely on the Applicant); *In the Matter of Application to Change Water Right No. 41H 1223599 by MGRR #1, LLC.*, (DNRC Final Order 2005). The Department is required to grant a permit only if the § 85-2-311, MCA, criteria are proven by the Applicant by a preponderance of the evidence. *Bostwick Properties, Inc.*, ¶ 21.

36. Section 85-2-311 (1)(b) of the Water Use Act does not contemplate a de minimis level of adverse effect on prior appropriators. *Wesmont Developers v. DNRC*, CDV-2009-823, First Judicial District Court, *Memorandum and Order*, 8 (2011).

37. The Applicant has proven by a preponderance of the evidence that the water rights of a prior appropriator under an existing water right, a certificate, a permit, or a state water reservation will not be adversely affected. Section 85-2-311(1)(b), MCA. (FOF 16-17)

#### ADEQUATE DIVERSION

38. Pursuant to § 85-2-311(1)(c), MCA, an Applicant must demonstrate that the proposed means of diversion, construction, and operation of the appropriation works are adequate.

39. The adequate means of diversion statutory test merely codifies and encapsulates the case law notion of appropriation to the effect that the means of diversion must be reasonably effective, i.e., must not result in a waste of the resource. *In the Matter of Application for Beneficial Water Use Permit No. 33983s41Q by Hoyt* (DNRC Final Order 1981); § 85-2-312(1)(a), MCA.

40. Applicant has proven by a preponderance of the evidence that the proposed means of diversion, construction, and operation of the appropriation works are adequate for the proposed beneficial use. Section 85-2-311(1)(c), MCA (FOF 18-20)

#### BENEFICIAL USE

41. Under § 85-2-311(1)(d), MCA, an Applicant must prove by a preponderance of the evidence the proposed use is a beneficial use.

42. An appropriator may appropriate water only for a beneficial use. See also, § 85-2-301 MCA. It is a fundamental premise of Montana water law that beneficial use is the basis, measure, and limit of the use. *E.g., McDonald; Toohey v. Campbell* (1900), 24 Mont. 13, 60 P.

396. The amount of water under a water right is limited to the amount of water necessary to sustain the beneficial use. *E.g.*, *Bitterroot River Protective Association v. Siebel*, Order on Petition for Judicial Review, Cause No. BDV-2002-519, Montana First Judicial District Court, Lewis and Clark County (2003), affirmed on other grounds, 2005 MT 60, 326 Mont. 241, 108 P.3d 518; *In The Matter Of Application For Beneficial Water Use Permit No. 43C 30007297 by Dee Deaterly* (DNRC Final Order), affirmed other grounds, *Dee Deaterly v. DNRC*, Cause No. 2007-186, Montana First Judicial District, Order Nunc Pro Tunc on Petition for Judicial Review (2009); *Worden v. Alexander* (1939), 108 Mont. 208, 90 P.2d 160; *Allen v. Petrick* (1924), 69 Mont. 373, 222 P. 451; *In the Matter of Application for Beneficial Water Use Permit No. 41S-105823 by French* (DNRC Final Order 2000).

43. Amount of water to be diverted must be shown precisely. *Sitz Ranch v. DNRC*, DV-10-13390, Fifth Judicial District Court, Order Affirming DNRC Decision, 3 (2011) (citing *BRPA v. Siebel*, 2005 MT 60, and rejecting Applicant's argument that it be allowed to appropriate 800 acre-feet when a typical year would require 200-300 acre-feet).

44. It is the Applicant's burden to produce the required evidence. *Bostwick Properties, Inc. v. DNRC*, 2013 MT 48, ¶ 22, 369 Mont. 150, 296 P.3d 1154 ("issuance of the water permit itself does not become a clear, legal duty until [the applicant] proves, by a preponderance of the evidence, that the required criteria have been satisfied"); *Sitz Ranch v. DNRC*, DV-10-13390, Fifth Judicial District Court, Order Affirming DNRC Decision, (2011) Pg. 7; *In the Matter of Application to Change Water Right No. 41H 1223599 by MGRR #1, LLC.*, (DNRC Final Order 2005); see also *Royston*; *Ciotti*.

45. Applicant proposes to use water for lawn and garden irrigation which is a recognized beneficial use. Section 85-2-102(5), MCA. Applicant has proven by a preponderance of the evidence lawn and garden irrigation is a beneficial use and that 0.5 AF of diverted volume and 15 GPM is the amount needed to sustain the beneficial use. Section 85-2-311(1)(d), MCA. (FOF 21-22)

#### POSSESSORY INTEREST

46. Pursuant to § 85-2-311(1)(e), MCA, an Applicant must prove by a preponderance of the evidence that it has a possessory interest or the written consent of the person with the possessory interest in the property where the water is to be put to beneficial use, or if the proposed use has a point of diversion, conveyance, or place of use on national forest system lands, the Applicant has any written special use authorization required by federal law to occupy,

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use, or traverse national forest system lands for the purpose of diversion, impoundment, storage, transportation, withdrawal, use, or distribution of water under the permit.

47. Pursuant to ARM 36.12.1802:

(1) An Applicant or a representative shall sign the application affidavit to affirm the following:

(a) the statements on the application and all information submitted with the application are true and correct and

(b) except in cases of an instream flow application, or where the application is for sale, rental, distribution, or is a municipal use, or in any other context in which water is being supplied to another and it is clear that the ultimate user will not accept the supply without consenting to the use of water on the user's place of use, the Applicant has possessory interest in the property where the water is to be put to beneficial use or has the written consent of the person having the possessory interest.

(2) If a representative of the Applicant signs the application form affidavit, the representative shall state the relationship of the representative to the Applicant on the form, such as president of the corporation, and provide documentation that establishes the authority of the representative to sign the application, such as a copy of a power of attorney.

(3) The department may require a copy of the written consent of the person having the possessory interest.

48. The Applicant has proven by a preponderance of the evidence that it has a possessory interest, or the written consent of the person with the possessory interest, in the property where the water is to be put to beneficial use. Section 85-2-311(1)(e), MCA. (FOF 23)

### **PRELIMINARY DETERMINATION**

Subject to the terms, analysis, and conditions in this Order, the Department preliminarily determines that this Application for Beneficial Water Use Permit No. 76LJ 30162100 should be GRANTED.

The Department determines the Applicant may divert water from the Whitefish Lake, by means of a pump, from April 15 to October 15 at 15 GPM up to 0.5 AF, from a point in the NE $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$  Section 22, Township 31N, Range 22W, Flathead County, Montana, for lawn and garden use from April 15 to October 15. The Applicant may irrigate lawn and garden on 0.2 acres. The place of use is located in the NE $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$  Section 22, Township 31N, Range 22W, Flathead County, Montana.



**NOTICE**

The Department will provide public notice of this application and the Department's Preliminary Determination to Grant pursuant to § 85-2-307, MCA. The Department will set a deadline for objections to this application pursuant to §§ 85-2-307, and -308, MCA. If this application receives a valid objection, it will proceed to a contested case proceeding pursuant to Title 2 Chapter 4 Part 6, MCA, and § 85-2-309, MCA. If this application receives no valid objection or all valid objections are unconditionally withdrawn, the Department will grant this application as herein approved. If this application receives a valid objection(s) and the valid objection(s) are conditionally withdrawn, the Department will consider the proposed condition(s) and grant the application with such conditions as the Department decides necessary to satisfy the applicable criteria. Sections 85-2-310, -312, MCA.

DATED this 10<sup>th</sup> day of May, 2024.

/Original signed by Jennifer Daly/  
Jennifer Daly, Manager  
Helena Regional Office  
Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation

**CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE**

This certifies that a true and correct copy of the [DRAFT] PRELIMINARY DETERMINATION TO GRANT was served upon all parties listed below on this 10<sup>th</sup> day of May, 2024, by first class United States mail.

Lion Mountain Owners Association  
Attn: Ragnar Stoelzle, VP  
PO Box 734  
Whitefish, MT 59937-0734

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Helena Regional Office, (406) 444-6999